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244 Worcester Street - Churchill & Banks Companies, LLC - Warehouse Facility1 message

johnbp9999@yahoo.com via Town of Grafton MA <cmsmailer@civicplus.com>

Mon, Sep 27, 2021 at 3:53 PM

Reply-To: "johnbp9999@yahoo.com" <cmsmailer@civicplus.com>

To: Planning Department <planningdept@graffon-ma.gov>

Planning Board Public Comment Form

Submitted from the Town of Grafton website on Monday, September 27, 2021 - 3:53pm

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Submitted by user: Anonymous

Submitted values are:

Select a Project: 244 Worcester Street - Churchill & Banks Companies, LLC - Warehouse Facility

First Name: John

Last Name: Perry et al

Email Address: johnbp9999@yahoo.comStreet Address: [8 Fairlawn Street](#)

City: Grafton

State: Massachusetts

Public Comment Disclaimer: I have read and understand the Public Comment Disclaimer.

Comments:

To the Members of the Grafton Planning Department,

This letter is being submitted on behalf of two residents/homeowners of Fairlawn Street. This project not only affects abutters but many other residents/homeowners along route 122 Worcester Street and the neighborhoods just off that road.

Although North Grafton is the area of town in which many businesses are located, the Town needs to put in place a more long-term strategic plan regarding how they will work with developers on projects that affect not only direct abutters, but all residents of Grafton. It is a clear and popular opinion that having businesses in town will help reduce the overall tax burden on residents, but this must be done carefully and thoughtfully. It is important to navigate through the process in a way that looks at not only the current impact on neighbors and the town as a whole, but how it will affect these same people years down the road. Once a decision is made, it is difficult, if not impossible, to be undone.

Wyman-Gordon has been a valued business in Grafton for 75 years. The building sits very far back from the road and offers a large grass buffer between its building and the road. They do not generate a large amount of traffic or noise. Our concern with this proposed plan is the size, scope and impact of the project in the following areas: facility size, lights, traffic/safety and noise, lack of environmental study and lack of information as to the tax benefits for the residents of Grafton.

This project is to build a warehouse, but without a specific company attached to it. The ask for a variance on the parking should be denied, in our opinion. The parking requirements for a building this size should not be waived. Not only does the Town need to consider who might utilize this facility in the near term, but they must consider who might be a future user. There must be enough parking to satisfy the needs of a building that size. We strongly recommend that the Planning Board vote against the variance for the reduced parking spaces.

The project is also asking for a variance on the height of the building. The biggest impact from granting this variance would be the light cast from the outdoor lighting into the abutters and adjacent neighbors' homes. The current Wyman Gordon Building is over 400 feet off the road and yet at night, most of the residents of Fairlawn Street, some 700 plus feet away from the building can see these lights at night from their homes. The lighting from this proposed new building, approximately 350 feet closer to the road will increase the amount of light trespass that the neighbors of this project will have to deal with. We have concerns for our neighbors on Maplewood that this light trespass will lead to the real possibility of health concerns like sleep deprivation due to the constant bright lights from this building in their home. In the early evenings of the winter, when it is dark at 5 pm, the lights from this new proposed building could be shining on their properties for 12 or more hours a day.

The traffic study completed for this proposal was in March of 2021, during the COVID pandemic when most non-essential employees were still working from home. The numbers provided in the study summarized that there would be no significant impact on traffic in the area and there were no issues raised regarding safety. We believe this traffic study is inaccurate. First, there are still many companies whose employees from Grafton continue their temporary remote work, and are not commuting right now, but most likely will be on these roads again in the future. Second, although the proposal states on page 3 of the Traffic Impact and Access Study that, "It should be noted that a conventional warehouse use is proposed for the site. The site is not anticipated to contain any of the specialized warehouse types such as a "Last Mile" warehouse or fulfillment center, related to localized distribution of e-commerce items. Accordingly, trips were based on the general warehouse land use code of warehousing for this analysis." When the use of phrases like, "not anticipated" appear, it is double-speak for not caring about the end use of the property once the proposal is approved. Use as a conventional warehouse is significantly different from "Last Mile" warehouse or fulfillment center. Next, we agree that the location of this proposed warehouse to the Massachusetts Turnpike will make it very attractive for future users. However, another flaw in the traffic study was only considering the traffic impact right in front of the proposed building and heading towards the Pike. The area in front of 244 Worcester Street has always been a heavily travelled road, even in off-peak hours. It can be difficult now to take a left-hand turn out of Hilltop, Fairlawn or Deernolm Streets. This is a main road not only to get to the Pike, but is used to travel to Millbury and Worcester. It is a main route for emergency vehicles as well. To not include the area east of the proposed property in the traffic study is another flaw. There has been an increase in traffic and accidents in the area of the Cumberland Farms, which is diagonal to the new proposed employee entrance (current gate C). Additionally, based upon the information provided in the proposal, this warehouse is planned to be in operation 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. 638 new vehicle trips on an average day, approximately 226 of those daily trips by 18-wheel tractor-trailers; about 26 vehicles every 2 to 3 minutes who enter or exit the property. The increase in noise, traffic and pollution from these 226 trips alone is negatively impactful to those in the Town, but especially to the abutters. The report also uses terms like "anticipated", which means there could be a significant increase to what is being proposed as there are 92 bays for tractor-trailers in this plan. The roadway itself is not currently able to safely accommodate this many additional large vehicles entering and exiting this proposed property. At current state, there are vehicles who travel Maplewood Drive, Hilltop and Fairlawn Streets to avoid traffic on route 122. It is only reasonable to anticipate an increase in vehicle traffic and increased speeds of vehicles on these roads as they circumnavigate the anticipated additional traffic on route 122. Furthermore, it is unrealistic to think that all traffic coming and going from this proposed warehouse, which includes passenger vehicles, delivery vehicles, and 18-wheel tractor-trailers, will be accessing this site from the Mass Pike. Currently there is measurable tractor-trailer traffic that travels route 140 from route 290 into Grafton. Some of these tractor-trailers travel the small side street of Bridge Street which connects route 140 to route 122. With the approval of this 24/7/365 warehouse facility, the increase in 18-wheel tractor-trailer traffic utilizing such intersections not only creates safety concerns, but the likelihood of traffic delays as they try to navigate through these tight areas. The intersection at 140 and Bridge Street was not built to safely accommodate tractor-trailers. Again, we believe the traffic study should not be considered as valid.

Additionally, the increase in noise and pollution are also factors to consider. Those of us who live near the Mass Pike are used to the constant low hum in the background. The traffic from route 122 is steady, but does not negatively impact our day to day. We fully understand that our homes are close to main roads and that traffic noise will always be part of our "background" noise. If a facility is in operation 24/7 with 18-wheel tractor-trailers coming and going all day and all night, the increase in noise in the immediate area will be excessive. We would be hearing noises including back up beepers, loud braking systems, the idling of diesel engines, 18-wheel tractor-trailer trucks waiting to enter and leave the facility in addition to any noises being generated from the facility itself. As we do not know the intended end use, it is hard to know what additional noises may emanate from across the street. With 92 bays, this facility may be used by several companies. It may be purchased or leased by one company who sublets to several other companies. Not knowing who the end-users will be would make it difficult for the neighbors and the Town to solve and/or mitigate potential issues that arise after the build is approved. Noise has health-related impacts as well. Available information on "Decibel Level Comparison Chart" states that 18-wheel diesel tractor-trailers idle at approximately 100 decibels; a quiet home averages 40 decibels. For comparison, one hundred decibels is between the sounds of a power mower and a subway train at 200 feet (<https://ehs.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/decibel-level-chart.pdf>). There are studies that associate many health risks due to constant exposure to noise. One article, "The Adverse Effects of Environmental Noise Exposure on Oxidative Stress and Cardiovascular Risk," (Münzel et al.) which can be read here: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5898791/>, details how noise is a non-specific stressor and can lead to sleep disturbance and psychological stress, as well as interrupting the cognitive development of children exposed to constant noise. Noise is not just a nuisance, it can be harmful to the health of those who are subject to it. This proposed project will create significant noise during the nights, at times when abutters currently have the most quiet, and increase the noise during the day.

With regards to the changes in the property with the proposed building of this massive structure, no environmental impact study was conducted. An Environmental Impact Statement is an important part of any proposal to examine potential consequences, identify positive and negative effects on the environment, and offer alternative actions. It would be naive and ill-advised to move forward with a project of this magnitude without knowing current and possible future environmental impacts.

We strongly feel that it would be short-sighted and not in the best interest of the Town of Grafton to move forward with this project. It is our genuine hope that the decisions made regarding this project are in the best interest of the abutters,

neighbors in the area, the townspeople of Grafton and the Town of Grafton alike.

Respectfully submitted,

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<https://Ehs.yale.edu/Sites/Default/Files/Files/Decibel-Level-Chart.pdf>. Yale University.

Münzel, Thomas, et al. "The Adverse Effects of Environmental Noise Exposure on Oxidative Stress and Cardiovascular Risk." Antioxidants & Redox Signaling, Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., 20 Mar. 2018, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5898791/>.